

SECTION VII. LOW BIRTH WEIGHT

Low birth weight (a weight at birth of less than 2,500 grams or 5.5 lbs.) is correlated with preterm birth and is a main cause of infant mortality and morbidity. There were 3,871 low birth weight babies born in Maricopa County during 2001; of those, 624 were very low birth weight (weighing less than 1,500 grams). The percent of low birth weight (LBW) births in the county increased slightly between 1997 (6.8%) and 2001 (7.0%). In 2001, 1.1% percent of births were very low birth weight (VLBW) and 3.8% of births were high birth weight (HBW; 4,250 grams or more). Figure 27 shows birth weight categories for each year. Maricopa County has not reached the Healthy People 2000 and 2010 objectives for the percent of LBW (5.0%) or VLBW (1.0% and 0.9%, respectively) births.

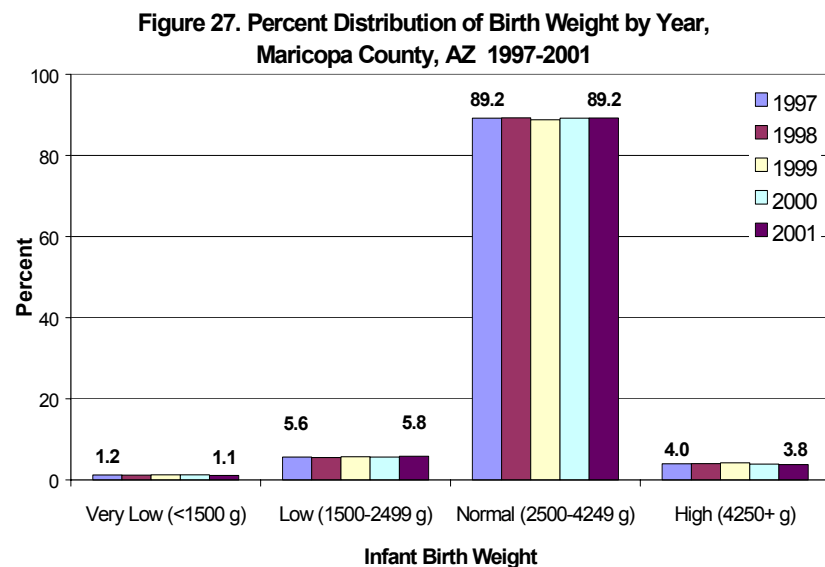


Figure 28. Percent Distribution of Low Birth Weight Births by Maternal Age Group, Maricopa County, AZ 1998-2001 Average

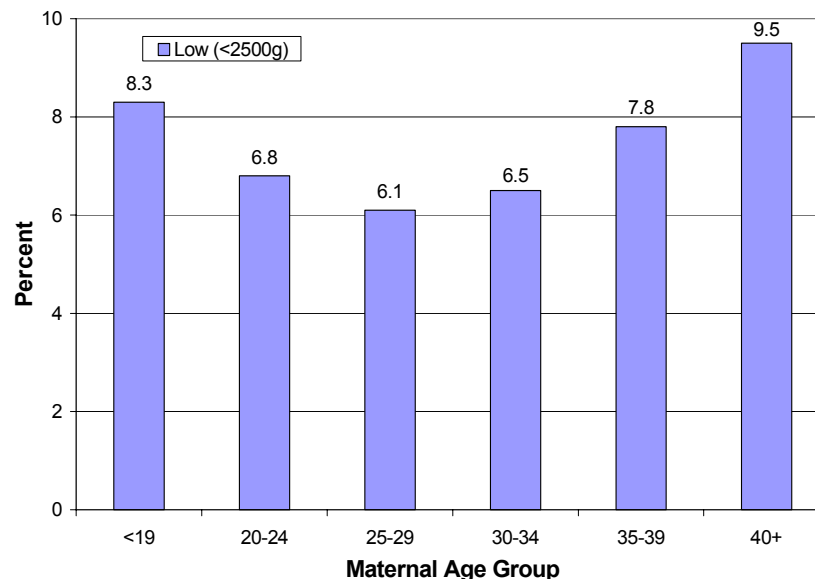
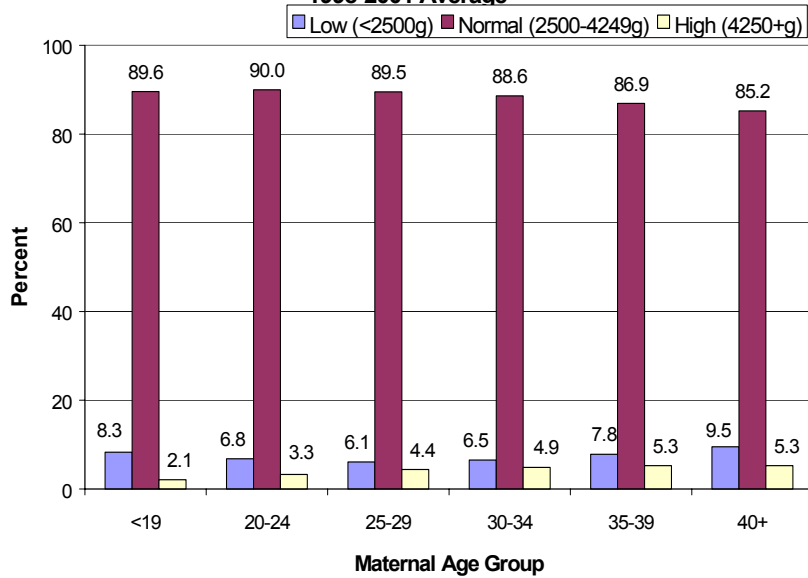


Figure 28 shows the J-shaped curve that was also observed for preterm births. There were higher percentages of LBW births for the younger and older age group categories than for women in their twenties.

**Figure 29. Percent Distribution of Births within Maternal Age Group by Infant Birth Weight, Maricopa County, AZ
1998-2001 Average**



The percent of high birth weight births increased as the age of the mother increased. Two percent of teenagers experienced a high birth weight birth, but 5.3% of women 35 years of age and over experienced a high birth weight birth (see Figure 29).

**Figure 30. Percent Distribution of Births by Infant Birth Weight within Maternal Race/Ethnicity, Maricopa County, AZ
1998-2001 Average**

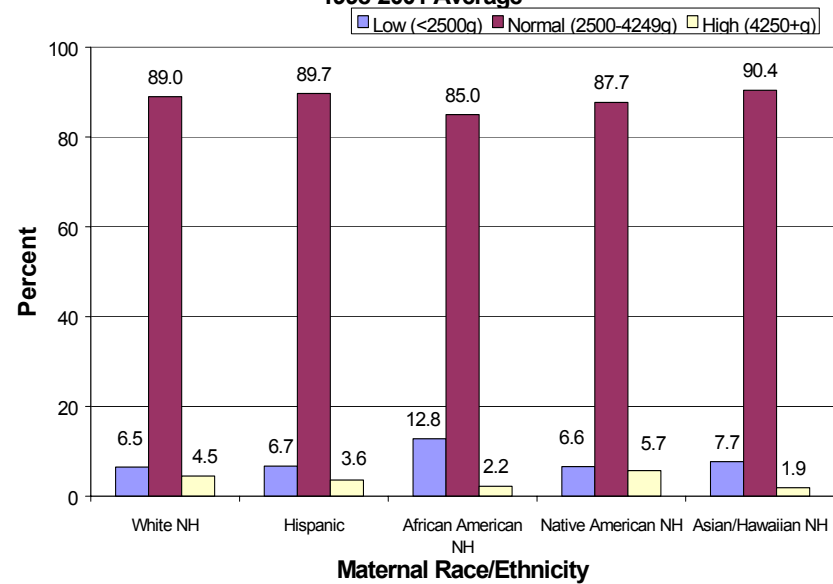
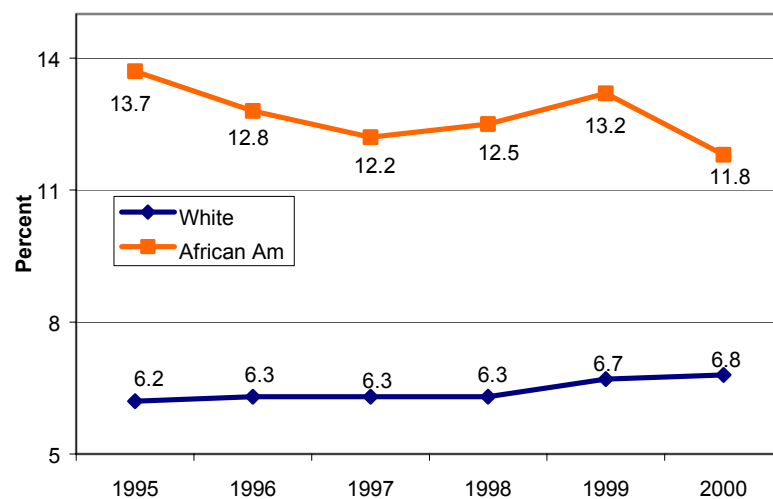


Figure 30 shows the average infant birth weight distribution by maternal race/ethnicity for the years 1998-2001. The percent of LBW births was highest for African American women (12.8%). Native American (5.7%) and White (4.5%) women had the highest percentages of high birth weight births, while African American (2.2%) women had the lowest percentage.

In 1995, the percent of low birth weight births for Whites was 6.2% and for African Americans it was 13.7%. In 2000, the percentage of low birth weight births for Whites increased to 6.8% and African Americans decreased to 11.8%. The graph below (Figure 31) shows the differences that exist between African Americans and Whites in low birth weight births.

Figure 31. Low Birth Weight (<2500g) by Maternal Race/Ethnicity (African American and White), Maricopa County, AZ 1995-2000



Mothers with less than twelve years of education had a slightly higher rate of LBW babies and a lower rate of HBW babies than mothers with twelve or more years of education. Figure 32 shows the birth weight distribution by maternal education level.

Figure 32. Percent of Births by Birth Weight and Education Level, Maricopa County, AZ 2001

